

## LET'S SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT

On August 16, 2006, the Laredo Morning Times printed a front page article alleging a failure of the Sheriff's Department to move bodies in Webb County. Due to consistent fact errors and misrepresentations by reporters and management at Laredo Morning Times in covering stories on the Webb County Sheriff's Office, it is time the taxpayers knew the truth. So, let's set the record straight.

The fact is that in early 2005, the Webb County Sheriff's Department got a request from Webb County Commissioner's Court to assist with the transportation of bodies to the Bexar County Medical Examiner's Office in an effort to try to save taxpayers' money. The request was for the transportation of bodies to San Antonio, only—not to pick up bodies from crime scenes for transportation to the County morgue.

The Webb County Sheriff's Office and Commissioner's Court worked together to research the issue and hammer out the details of the agreement which included budget expenditures such as equipment (2 trucks), fuel, maintenance costs, personnel and supplies. It was determined, that if arrangements on funding and personnel could be made between the Webb County Commissioners Court and the Sheriff's Department, Sheriff Rick Flores would be willing to take on this new transportation responsibility.

When the two trucks arrived, they came without the refrigeration units. Several months later, the refrigeration units arrived and were installed but Commissioner Court had yet to approve personnel, maintenance costs or a budget which would be required to put the trucks into operation. Without Commissioner's Court action, the Sheriff's hands were tied in putting the plan into place.

Commissioners Court, the county judge and most citizens of Webb County need to know that more than 130 bodies are sent to the county morgue each year and that Webb County is responsible for operating the Webb County morgue—not the Webb County Sheriff's Department. However, Sheriff Flores stepped up to help out Commissioners Court and the taxpayers of Webb County in an effort to help cut costs. This despite the fact that the Sheriff has NO LEGAL OBLIGATION to run the morgue—Webb County is bound by law to do so.

The public should know that the Sheriff's Department has made previous requests for budgetary assistance to help make this operation work. This year, the Sheriff's Department has been allocated one part-time driver (for half a year) and a part-time physician, instead of the two deputies requested (actually, the true need is for six deputies at peak times).

And in June 12, 2006 Commissioners Court meeting, the county judge made it clear that the refrigerated trucks didn't belong to the Sheriff's Department (who never asked for them in the first place).

Webb County Sheriff's Department is here to protect and serve the constituents of Webb County 24/7, 365 days a year. If you have any questions or comments on this or any other issue, please log on to our website: **[www.webbcountytx.gov/sheriff](http://www.webbcountytx.gov/sheriff)**

Webb County Sheriff's Department also welcomes your suggestions and your help in solving crimes. If you have information about a crime, please call Crime Stoppers at (956)727-TIPS (727-8477)